

WASHINGTON – U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk today announced he secured the final \$99 million for the completion of the James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center in the omnibus appropriations bill passed by Congress this week. The bill, now headed to the President's desk for signature, will fund a new \$120 million health care center at the joint VA/Navy hospital, keeping projections of opening in 2010 on schedule.

"This is the final funding component to make our dream come true -- a new \$100 million state-of-the-art Veterans-Navy hospital that ensures veterans will receive state-of-the-art health care in Northern Illinois," Congressman Kirk said. "As we gather for the holiday season, we renew our commitment to expand health care for our veterans and Navy families. After seven years of dedicated work, our congressional district will soon be home to the first-in-the-nation health care partnership between the Navy and the VA. This is the perfect holiday present for those who wore the uniform."

The first part of the project now underway is a \$16 million parking garage, new site entrance and intersection at Green Bay Road. The new \$99 million appropriation will pave the way for a large ambulatory care center scheduled for construction next year.

Once completed, the joint VA/Navy hospital will improve health care for over 50,000 veterans, 40,000 sailors, 30,000 dependents and 10,000 military retirees living in Northern Illinois. The facility will share doctors and services for more efficient and cutting edge health care.

In 2001, Congressman Kirk set the goal of saving the VA by combining it with a new naval hospital. In 2003, Kirk won approval for the first phase of the integration project, moving the Navy's mental health unit into the North Chicago VA. Last year, Kirk participated in the opening of a \$13 million joint Navy/VA emergency room and surgical facility.

The facility is expected to open in 2010 with a total cost of approximately \$120 million. The facility will save an estimated \$160 million through the projected 40-year life of the hospital.